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Letter dated 20 November 2007 from the Permanent Representatives of Slovakia and South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

We are pleased to inform you about successful results of the International Workshop on Enhancing United Nations Support for Security Sector Reform in Africa: Towards an African Perspective, which was held in Cape Town, South Africa, on 7 and 8 November 2007.

The workshop was organized by the Republic of South Africa and the Slovak Republic as a follow-up to the open debate during the Slovak presidency in the Security Council in February 2007 and co-chaired by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of South Africa and Slovakia, Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma and Ján Kubiš.

Once again, the workshop noted that an ineffective and poorly governed security sector could represent a decisive obstacle to peace, stability, poverty reduction, sustainable development, rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights. The workshop identified four key security sector reform themes of particular relevance in the African context: (i) local/national ownership; (ii) national capacity-building; (iii) regional and subregional actors and dimensions of security sector reform; and (iv) the role of external assistance in security sector reform.

While recognizing that the need for security sector reform is not specific to Africa, the workshop identified some of the unique challenges confronting security sector reform in Africa as including the general low level of economic development on the continent, the fragility and weakness of several African States and the complexities arising from the simultaneous intervention of several external actors. The case studies on South Africa, the Sudan, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Guinea-Bissau served to illustrate some of the challenges and opportunities facing security sector reform on the African continent.

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For your information, attached please find the Statement of the Co-Chairs, which contains the main outcomes of the workshop (see annex).

We should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 12 and 14, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Peter **Burian**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of Slovakia

(*Signed*) Dumisani S. **Kumalo**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of South Africa

Annex to the letter dated 20 November 2007 from the Permanent Representatives of Slovakia and South Africa to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Statement of the Co-Chairs of the International Workshop on Enhancing United Nations Support for Security Sector Reform in Africa: Towards an African Perspective

Cape Town, 7 and 8 November 2007

1. The International Workshop on Enhancing United Nations Support for Security Sector Reform in Africa: Towards an African Perspective was held on 7 and 8 November 2007 in Cape Town, South Africa, with more than 150 participants representing 47 countries, including 25 African countries, the African Union, including ECOWAS and SADC, and the United Nations system as well as several non-governmental organizations. A joint initiative by South Africa and Slovakia, with the support of UNDP, Canada, Norway and Switzerland, this Workshop was organized in the context of the ongoing debate on security sector reform within the United Nations. The Workshop was co-chaired by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs for South Africa and Slovakia, H.E. Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma and H.E. Mr. Ján Kubiš.

2. As a follow-up to the open debate of the United Nations Security Council held on 20 February 2007, the Workshop was meant to further discuss the role of the United Nations in supporting security sector reform with a focus on Africa. The objectives of the Workshop were: (i) to provide a forum for African States to identify and initiate a debate leading to a common African perspective on security sector needs and governance in all its aspects; (ii) to provide a forum for Africans to make conceptual and policy contributions to the ongoing efforts to articulate a common security sector reform concept for the United Nations; (iii) to make policy recommendations for improving coherence, coordination and comprehensiveness of United Nations and donor support to security sector reform in Africa.

3. The Workshop noted that an ineffective and poorly governed security sector can represent a decisive obstacle to peace, stability, poverty reduction, sustainable development, rule of law, good governance and respect for human rights. In this context, security sector reform may be of critical importance if it is a nationally owned process that is rooted in the specific needs and conditions of the country in question.

4. The Workshop observed that there is still little empirical research and understanding of how security sector reform actually functions in different contexts, non-conflict and post-conflict alike. It was noted, however, that the primary objective of security sector reform is to enhance the security of the citizens of a country. To this end the main strategies are to make the security services more effective and efficient, and to enhance democratic governance of the security sector. It was also agreed that security sector reform needs to be holistic, context-specific, nationally owned, be undertaken with a long-term perspective, and be located within a broader democratic political and governance framework.

African experiences in security sector reform

5. While recognizing that the need for security sector reform is not specific to Africa, the Workshop identified some of the unique challenges confronting security sector reform in Africa as including the general low level of economic development on the continent, the fragility and weakness of several African States and the complexities arising from the simultaneous intervention of several external actors.

6. The case studies on South Africa, the Sudan, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Guinea-Bissau, served to illustrate some of the challenges and opportunities facing security sector reform on the African continent. The case of South Africa illustrated the importance of a consultative, inclusive, locally driven and locally funded security sector reform process. The case of the Sudan demonstrated the challenges and complexities of addressing security sector reform issues within the context of a peace agreement. The case of Sierra Leone highlighted the importance of clear political commitment and leadership to security sector reform from within the country and the crucial long-term support and the benefits of a wide consultative process. The case of the Democratic Republic of the Congo highlighted the complexities of the regional dynamics, the problems that flow from uncoordinated external support to security sector reform, particularly in respect to the continuing challenges of reintegrating ex-combatants, and making the linkages between the processes of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform. The case of Guinea-Bissau highlighted the challenges associated with implementing a security sector reform process in a fragile environment with severe resource constraints.

Key security sector reform issues in Africa

7. The Workshop identified four key security sector reform themes of particular relevance in the African context, namely, (i) local/national ownership; (ii) national capacity-building; (iii) regional and subregional actors and dimensions of security sector reform; and (iv) the role of external assistance in security sector reform.

8. Local ownership means that security sector reform needs to be shaped or driven by local not external actors, with external actors playing a supportive and enabling role. Local ownership also means that a range of domestic actors including the government, the security services, parliament, and civil society ought to be involved in the development of security sector reform. The challenge is to ensure external support for local initiatives rather than local support for external initiatives.

9. Capacity-building was recognized as a key challenge to security sector reform in many African countries. Capacity-building entails efforts to empower knowledge and skills in relation to understanding, designing and implementing security sector reform and the delivery of security. The net result should be the enhancement of security in a country.

10. The discussions underscored the importance of the role of regional and subregional actors in supporting security sector reform in the African context. Organizations such as the African Union, ECOWAS and SADC have already supported security sector reform activities in the framework of their conflict prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding strategies. In this regard, the participants noted the centrality of the AU Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development framework. Furthermore, it was agreed that regional actors can facilitate external

engagement in security sector reform, play a coordinating role, and promote a human security agenda.

11. The Workshop acknowledged that external financial and technical assistance in supporting security sector reform efforts is essential. This support should be provided in a facilitating and empowering manner and should not be imposed. The primary responsibility for security sector reform rests with the national States.

The role of the United Nations in supporting security sector reform

12. The Workshop noted that the United Nations should play a role in supporting security sector reform activities. This role could include norms and standard setting, coordination, facilitation, convening forums and dialogue on security sector reform at the global, regional and national levels, and the provision of impartial technical advice on a range of security sector reform issues. The results of this Workshop should be reflected in the preparation of the Secretary-General's report. In this context, Member States ought to be fully involved in the consultation process.

13. The Workshop acknowledged that there is a need for a coherent United Nations concept for security sector reform which includes appropriate norms, principles and guidelines. Once such a common understanding has been developed, there is a need for greater clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the various United Nations entities. It will be important to ensure that the United Nations has sufficient capacity to carry out these roles and functions.

Follow-up

14. In order to sustain the momentum, and to derive maximum benefits from the Workshop, a number of follow-up activities were identified: (i) the Co-Chairs undertake to bring the results of this Workshop to the attention of the States Members of the United Nations; (ii) the Co-Chairs have agreed to inform the African Union and the European Union or other international organizations of which they are members, as appropriate, about the conclusions and outcomes of the Workshop; (iii) the Co-Chairs encourage the African Union to further develop a common security sector reform concept and strategy in close collaboration with the United Nations and African subregional and civil society organizations.